Blood of Christ fire Thou my blood."
Bow down before God's Spirit
in the *Virgin's Fiat*
in the *Fiat* of her Son
let all that is not God decrease
let Him increase all in all
you
are no longer capable of anything
no longer pretending to stand on God's level
bothering about how things are going
He your Father
giving you everything
you
His child
taking everything.
" Father
in heaven
hallowed Thy Name
Thy Kingdom come
Thy Will be done on earth as in heaven."

(To be continued.)

GOD'S CINDERELLA

Chesterton reflecting on the grotesque in nature wrote,

" I knew there can be laughter
On the secret face of God."

But certain gestures in God's providence even more than in His creation hint at whatever in the divine intellect is the prototype of a sense of humour in ours.

It seems, for instance, something like a heavenly jest that the canonisation of Margaret of Hungary should have been reserved for an age that passionately disapproves of almost everything she exemplifies. To begin with, was she not doomed by her parents, even before her birth, to a life of inhuman self-repression?

In 1241 Bela IV of Hungary and his queen had been hunted from one refuge to another by a Tartar invasion—that nightmare of eastern Europe in the 13th century. Tracked to their last resort, an island fortress in the Adriatic, they awaited inevitable capture and such gruesome death as might suit the horrid humour of their pursuers. At the queen's suggestion they promised to consecrate their unborn child to God if He should save their kingdom and lives. Thereupon the Tartars, their attention suddenly distracted by news recalling them to their own country, turned their backs on the prey within their reach and departed.

Margaret of Hungary belongs to the category of born saints.

For generations God had been preparing her as a willing victim for her country. Sanctity was in her blood. Hungary's first three kings, her ancestors, had been St. Stephen, St. Emeric and St. Ladislas I. There was her great-aunt St. Hedwig, her aunt St. Elizabeth of Hungary, her elder sister St. Cunegund, or Kinga, and her younger sister Blessed Yolande. Placed in a Dominican convent at the age of three and a half, she showed herself to be cut out for the part assigned to her. In less than six months she could say the Little Office of Our Lady without a mistake, and when the small daughters of Hungarian noble houses, who had been given her as companions, were at play, she would beg for her favourite game, which was " to go into the church and say good-day to God and Our Lady."

The modern world might have found some use for St. Margaret as a pathetic example of parental tyranny, but for this purpose she is quite hopeless. For it was parental resolve that broke down, and the victim that did battle for her right to be sacrificed. Three times between her eighth and her twentieth year was her marriage mooted. The king of Bohemia, her third suitor, chancing to visit the convent in the company of her brother Stephen, was so enchanted with her beauty that he offered himself, his realm and all his possessions if he might have her in marriage. Bela suggested applying for a papal dispensation from her vows, but Margaret, far from jumping at this chance of escape, vehemently refused.

As to her love of penances—another characteristic quite alien to our age—even the worst of them was so gaily performed that the word *morbid* dies on the lips of the baffled critic. Her contemporaries bear witness to the constant sweetness and serenity in her face, and to say that she never burst into uncontrolled laughter is to tell us that she laughed. She wept only out of devotion at her long prayers, especially at the elevation at Mass, for the Passion of Our Lord, the sins and sufferings of her fellowmen and—when anyone called her " Princess."

Some of the least comprehensible of her penances are partly explained by the truceless war made by " Sister Margaret " on " the Princess." King Bela might build a fine convent for his daughter, but during her whole life she should be its maid-of-all-work. He might send her dishes from the royal table, but Sister Margaret would see to it that the Princess never got a bite of them, and would have them given to the sick nuns and servants or to the poor outside. If the Queen sent good cloth for the Princess's habits, Sister Margaret would manage an exchange with the nuns whose clothes were oldest and most worn. The Princess detested dirt. If her clothes must be cut of repair at least she would wish them clean. Ah well! Sister

Margaret would soon get the better of her squeamishness, and teach her to ignore her body, which should be neither washed nor cared for, nor have so much as a change of clothes save but rarely.

She had taken an enthusiastic share in all the drudgery of the house from the time she could handle a broom or a dish-cloth. As she grew older she collected as her prerogative all the most unpleasant tasks in the housework, kitchen and infirmary.

The infirmarian of those days seems to have taken her office lightly and to have left her patients a good deal dependent on the charitable offices of chance comers. A nun, eighteen years bedridden, had been brought by the nature of her disease and what we should consider criminal neglect, to a condition so loathsome that no one was willing to nurse her. No one, except Sister Margaret, who begged to have charge of her. The Prioress gave leave on condition that Margaret took a companion to help her; but the companion could not face the work, and Sister Margaret, out of compassion, sent her away and tackled it alone.

The medieval attitude to dirtiness as a penance is to us astonishing and even scandalous. Garin de Gy-l'Eveque, later Master General of the Dominican Order, who in 1340 wrote Margaret's life from the process for her beatification, gives untranslatable particulars of her more repulsive work, and her care to make it as penitential as possible. For him, Margaret's dirtiness is the measure of her humility and self-sacrifice and he has no misgivings about the form they took.

A consideration of facts seems to show that he carried some of his conclusions too far. We can believe when a nun, passing Sister Margaret in filthy garments, shrank from her in disgust, she "cared not at all; but rejoiced," for she would feel that she had scored one against the Princess that time. But it is difficult to believe that her clothes were ordinarily filthy. Would she have thought it reverent to be so dressed for Communion, which, at least towards the end of her life, was daily in an age when frequent Communion was rare? Decency would forbid her so to appear before her royal relations, the grandees of the court and the Dominican friars who came to visit her and ask her wonder-working prayers. Hagiographers are perhaps inclined to translate incidents into habits. Sister Margaret may once, having no other receptacle at hand, have offered the skirt of her habit to a nun who was suddenly sick, but such emergencies can hardly have been habitual even in the worst regulated medieval infirmaries.

Although some of the Saint's Sisters expostulated with her for going too far, the community as a whole shared Garin's

attitude. Having recorded that from her seventeenth year she never took a bath, a contemporary MS lately discovered adds that "because of this and for other like reasons" she was beloved and reverenced by everyone, and goes on to relate a singular story which shows that this admiration was not confined to the community. Margaret's haircloth engendered vermin from which she suffered much. "Now one of the chief friars of the Order of Minors," says the chronicler, "who was in high repute both in his Order and at court, declared in presence of the king and queen, of certain friars of his own Order and ours, and of me who write this, how he saw in a dream the vermin in the clothing of the said virgin Margaret all changed into shining jewels." Imagine (with a shudder conceded to propriety) the scene transferred to a modern court! Yet no one seems to have thought this public allusion indelicate.

It seemed that God was on the side of the vermin. Margaret's answer to objections was characteristic and gives the key to the whole matter: "Suffer my body to be bitten by these lice for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. You need have no fear for yourselves." This last remark suggests that she had bargained with Our Lord to prevent her penance troubling anyone but herself. For us dirtiness implies slatternly neglect and sloth or at best a coarseness which, if not a moral fault in itself, is the natural setting of vice. Yet cleanliness is not really next to godliness, the two being on different planes and divided by all the distance between the natural and the supernatural, the human and the divine. But it was just because Margaret loathed dirt that she took it as matter for a sacrifice that pleased her by its very costliness. Theologians remind us that merit is measured, not by our suffering but by our love. Yet greater suffering is a testimony of greater love, and there seems to be a point in love's growth at which it must needs find expression in offering gifts dearly bought.

Besides, human sufferings united to the Passion of Christ share in its redeeming value, and there was need enough for penance and expiation in Margaret's country. The desolation and consequent anarchy following the Tartar invasion, tyrannical nobles, wholesale immigration of heathen colonists, the war made upon Bela by his graceless son Stephen, were all causes of disorder. Unjust sentences that sent thousands of men to death practically without trial, the oppression of the poor, the destruction of religious houses whether in Hungary or elsewhere wrung Margaret's compassionate heart. She did penance, wept, prayed and besought prayers with passionate urgency, always sorrowing most for the wrong done to Holy Mother Church and her children. She had all St. Catherine of Siena's love for the Church.

Margaret was at all times a peacemaker and a mediator, and her royal relatives nearly always gave in when she pleaded the cause of justice, and even when she pleaded the cause of mercy against justice, and had the veriest gallows birds let off their deserts. This was one of the occasions when the Princess came in handy, and Sister Margaret always made use of her when she could serve her purpose.

Surely it was the Princess, with an ascendancy that was a heritage of her race, who made her Sisters, even while they shuddered and wept, scourge her till she was bleeding and they breathless; for Garin says that "they dared not gainsay her and unwilling obeyed."

Even the Prioress abetted Margaret in her penances. It was during her brother's revolt and the evils that filled the country in the wake of civil war that she sought for some new penance to offer to God for the sins of her people. She then bethought her of improving on her hairshirt and discipline by substituting the prickly skins of hedgehogs, using them to scourge herself and also wearing them next her flesh. Now the hedgehogs were reared in the convent, apparently for Margaret's exclusive benefit, by the Prioress and another Sister. It is true that health was not, any more than cleanliness, one of the household gods of the Middle Ages. Besides, Margaret was a saint and the saints get their own way about these things because it happens also to be God's way—for them.

There was one interesting occasion when God Himself sided with the Princess against her superior, the Dominican Provincial. He refused to believe her account of an inundation of the Danube, whereupon she prayed—surely it was the Princess, stung in her honour, who prayed—that her truthfulness might be proved. Thereupon the Danube began again to rise. It flooded the enclosure and the convent itself, and the hapless Provincial had to escape by climbing on to the enclosure wall where he perched in undignified discomfiture, in full view of the nuns who had fled to the upper storey of the house, until at Margaret's prayer the water subsided. Being a miraculous flood it dried up of itself and left no trace behind, perhaps so that weary moppers-up might not be tempted to grumble at Margaret for making imprudent prayers.

A life such as this, lived intensively from the beginning, could not be a long one, and she died on the day she had predicted, at the age of twenty-eight. The long list of the testimonies of witnesses for the process of her canonisation is extant, and all the miracles are described with all those details that are convincing just because they are so unimportant that no one would have troubled to make them up.

In roughly sketching a few traits that distinguish St. Mar-

garet from other saints, I have shown only the smoke that betrays the fire. Of that inner sanctuary where it burns, Margaret has left no key in the shape of spiritual journal or mystical treatises. We only know that it was not her penances, her long fasts and vigils, her ecstasies, prophecies and miracles that make her a saint, but that love of God which prevented even the sharpest sufferings distracting her from Him, but made everything in her life its fuel. The difference between the saints and ourselves is in our love; and love may be had for the asking, if only we are willing to give *all* the substance of our house.

A TREATISE ON THE INEFFABLE MYSTERY OF OUR REDEMPTION

BY

LUIS OF GRANADA, O.P.

(*Translation by a Nun of Stanbrook Abbey*)

CHAPTER III (*continued*)

2

The doctrine of original sin shows the need of the remedy of our Saviour's Incarnation and Passion.

The doctrine of original sin and the consequent corruption of human nature it entailed is fundamental for understanding the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God and our need of that remedy. It should be noted that Divine Providence has made use of two remedies for man's sanctification—one is contained in the law of nature, the other in Holy Scripture; for by the former law the knowledge of good and evil is imprinted in men's hearts with the decree that they should practice the first and hate the other. He also gave them a natural love and reverence for God resembling that of children for their father. Besides this natural interior inclination there is one that is exterior, for the sun, the moon, the stars, the beauty of the movements of the heavens, the changes of the seasons, the development of things, and finally all creatures say: "God made me." The animals, with the perfection of their bodies and the instincts God bestowed upon them for their preservation, especially incite us to this love and reverence (cf. St. Augustine, *Confessions* X).

The result of the natural law was that although some men were just and holy, the universal punishment of the flood shows how small was their number compared with that of the wicked.

After this law, our Lord provided a more efficacious remedy by means of Holy Scripture. He descended to Mount Sinai and gave laws written by the finger of God. The children of Israel were astounded at the majesty and pomp of His presence and His